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Benumof et al.

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(54) **SIGN GUARD**

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(73) Assignee: **Public Safety Industries, LLC**

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Related U.S. Application Data

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(60) Provisional application No. 61/682,638, filed on Aug. 13, 2012.

(51) **Int. Cl.**
G09F 15/00 (2006.01)
G09F 7/18 (2006.01)

(52) **U.S. Cl.**
CPC ***G09F 7/18*** (2013.01); *G09F 2007/1804* (2013.01); *G09F 2007/1813* (2013.01); *G09F 2007/1826* (2013.01)

(58) **Field of Classification Search**
CPC G09F 7/18; G09F 2007/1804; G09F 15/0037
USPC 40/607.01, 607.11, 612, 661.03, 753; 248/218.4, 219.1, 219.2, 219.3, 219.4
See application file for complete search history.

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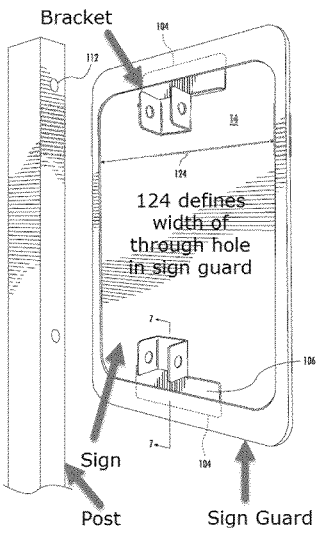
(57) **ABSTRACT**

A sign guard for protecting pedestrians and pets from sharp edges of a sign is disclosed. The sign guard may have a recess within which the sign is received. The recess may be sufficiently deep to cover the sharp edges of the sign to mitigate injury to pedestrians and pets. The sign guard may have a through hole for lightening the weight of the sign guard as well as relieving stress to prevent warpage during certain manufacturing techniques. Additionally, the sign guard may have two (2) mounting pads which protrude inwardly into the through hole for mounting the sign and sign guard to a post. Holes may be drilled or preformed in the mounting pads that line up to the mounting holes of the sign. Alternatively, the sign may be mounted to the sign guard and post by way of a retaining clip.

10 Claims, 8 Drawing Sheets



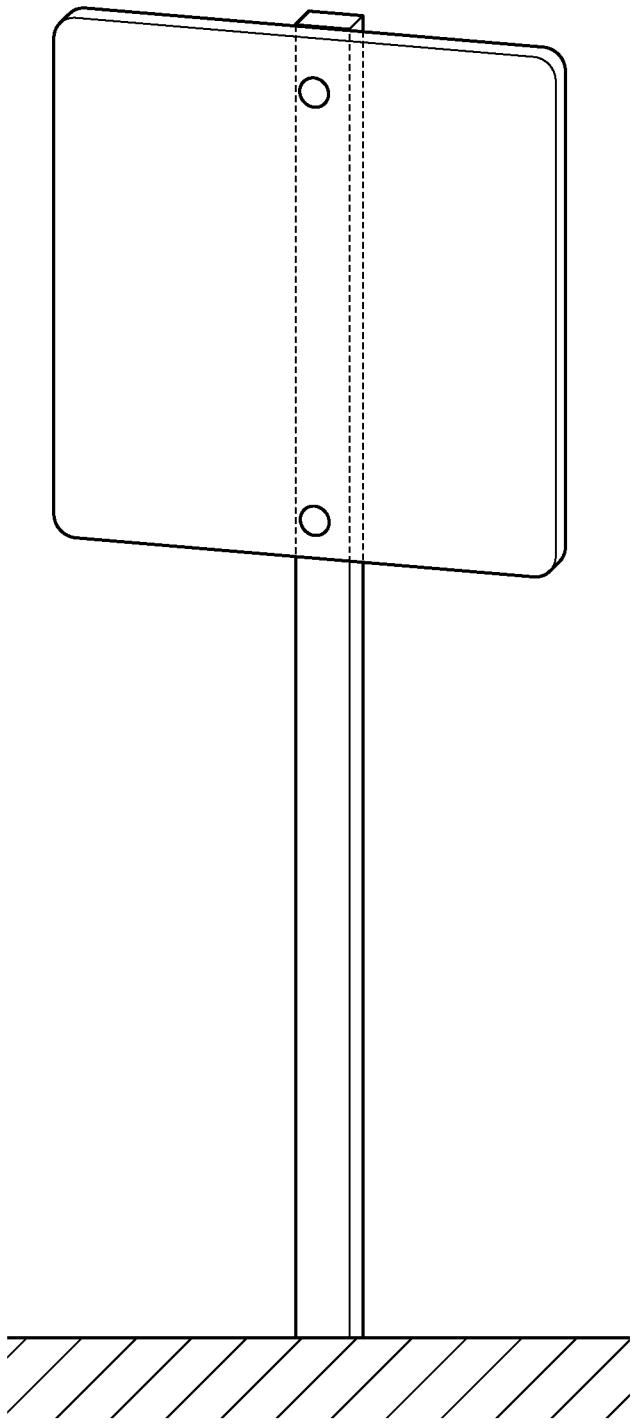


FIG. 1
PRIOR ART

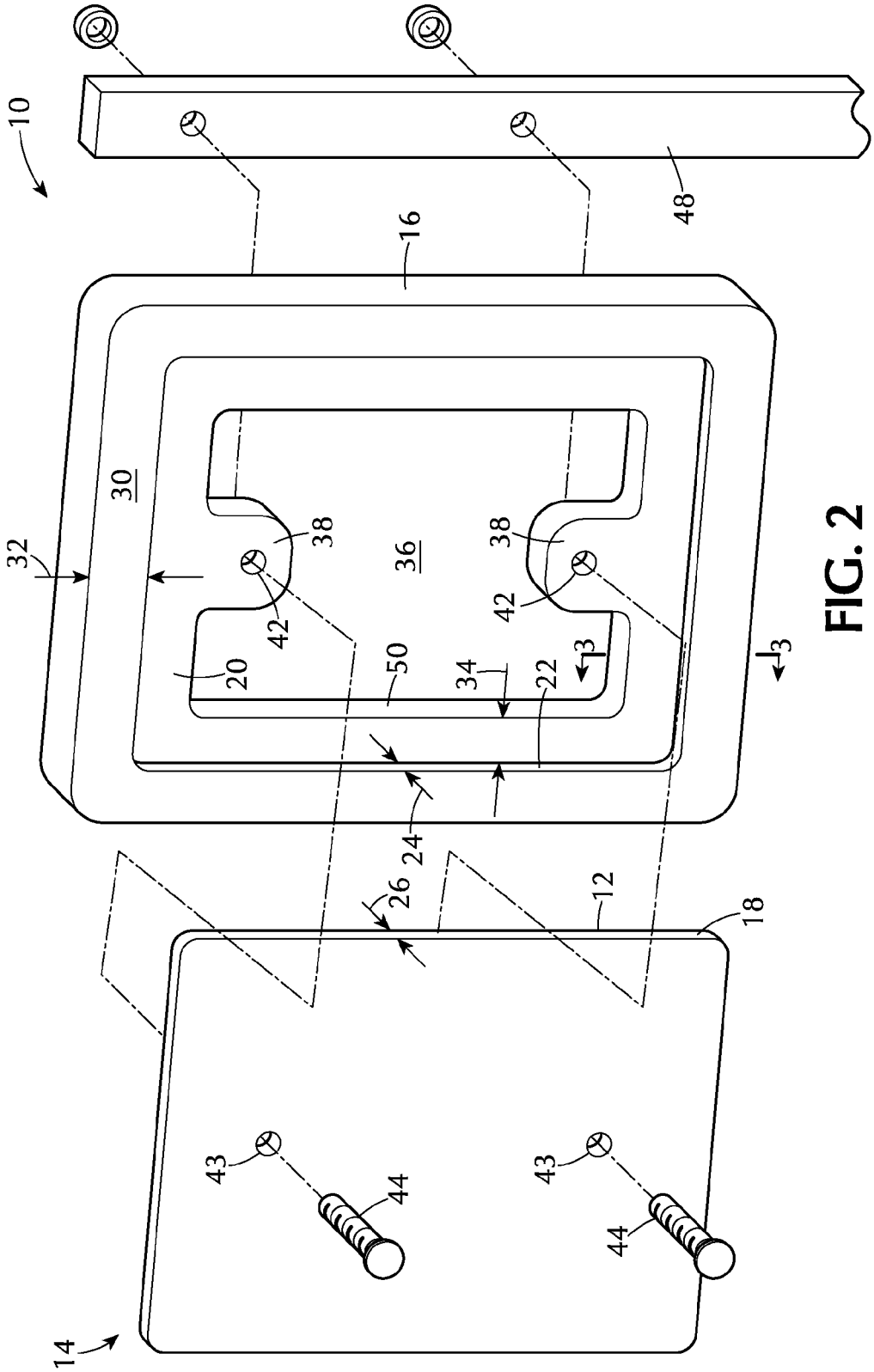


FIG. 2

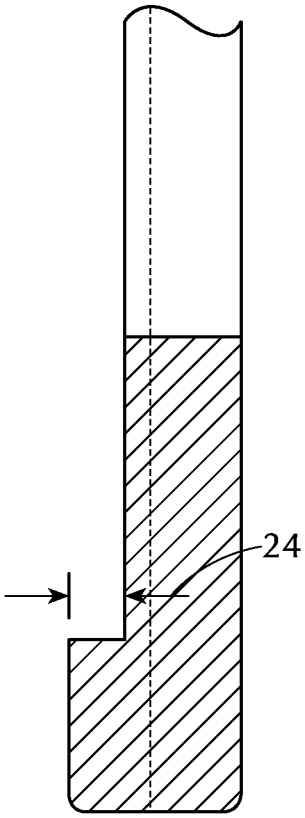


FIG. 3

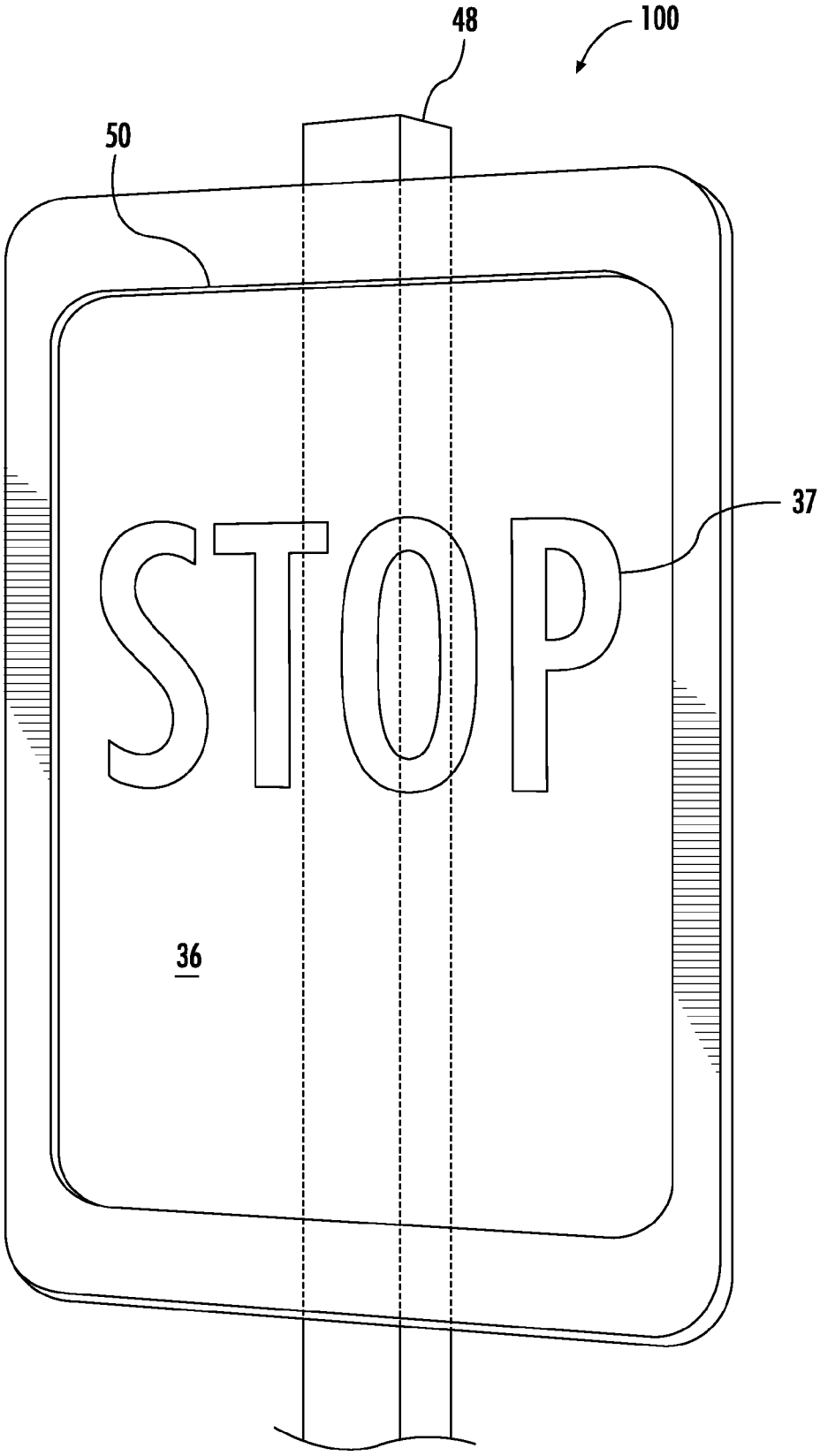


FIG. 4

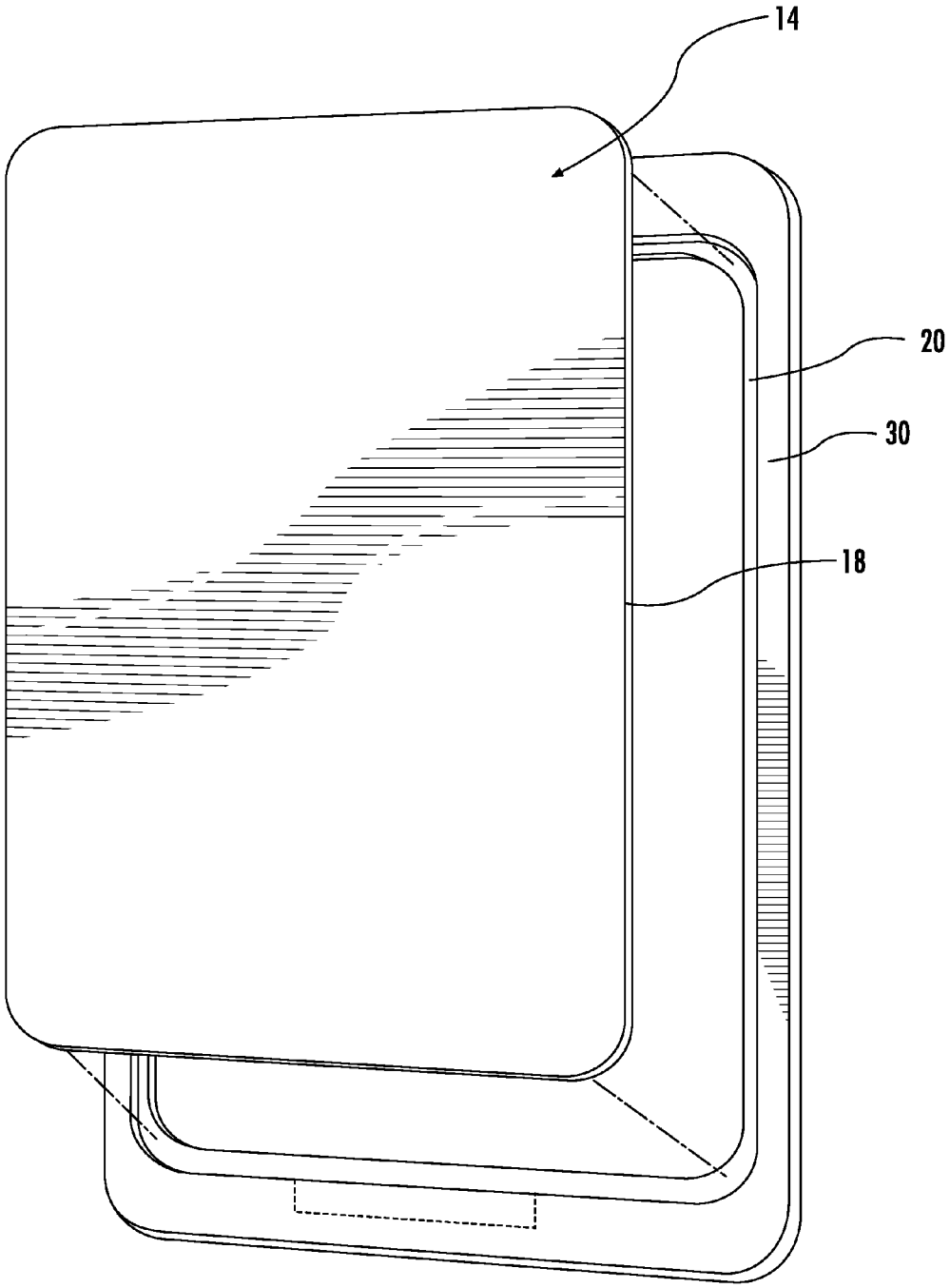


FIG. 5

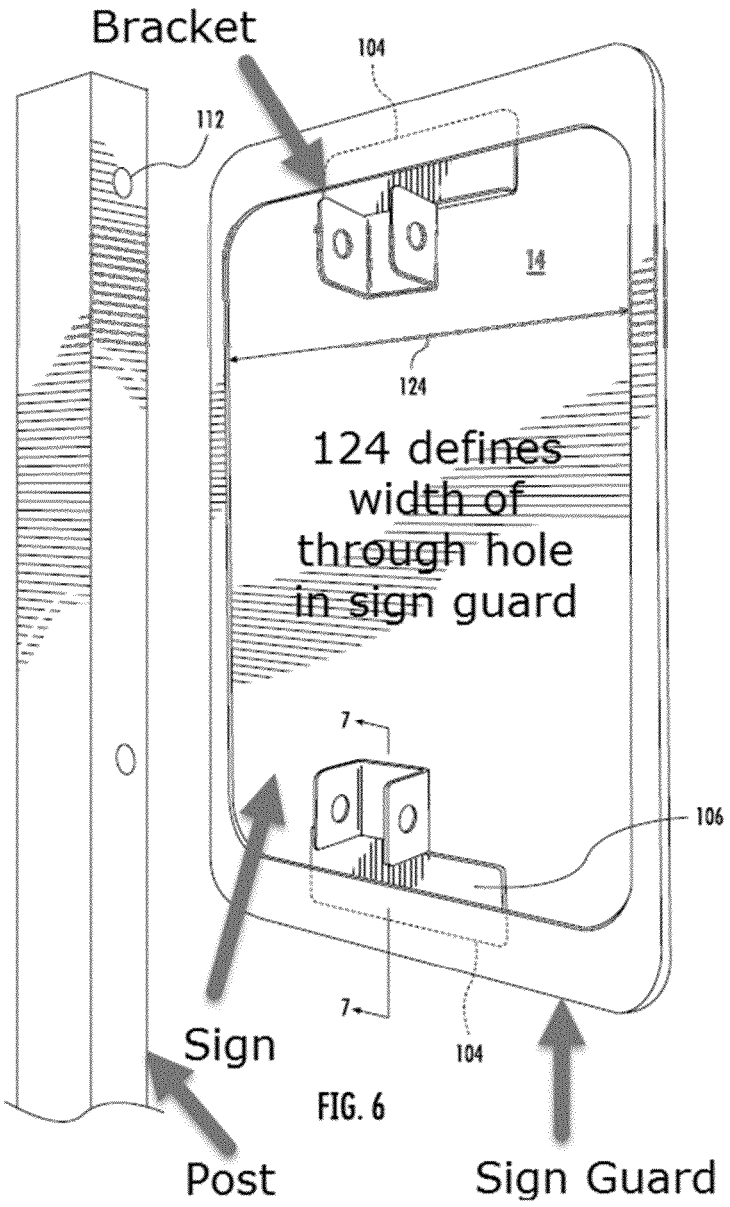

Bracket
104
112
14
124
124 defines width of through hole in sign guard
7
106
7
104
Sign
Post
Sign Guard

FIG. 6

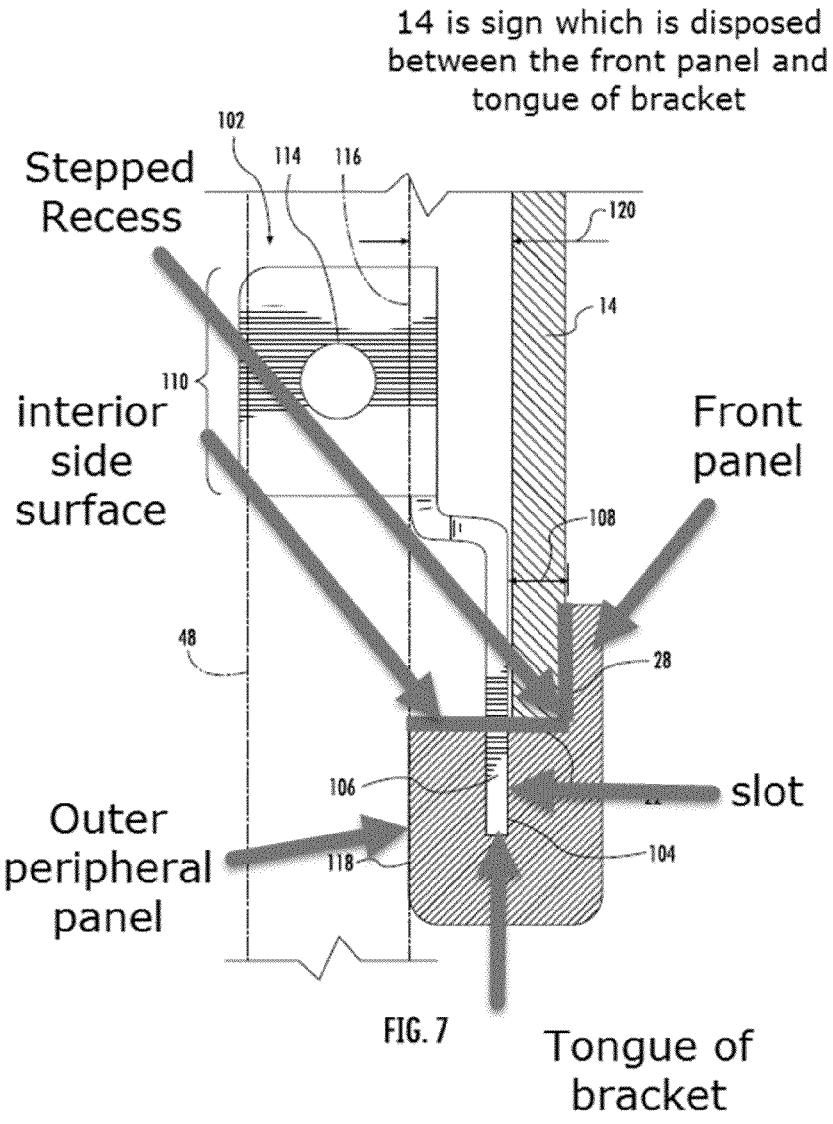

14 is sign which is disposed between the front panel and tongue of bracket
Stepped Recess
102
114
116
120
14
110
interior side surface
Front panel
108
48
28
106
slot
Outer peripheral panel
118
104
Tongue of bracket

FIG. 7

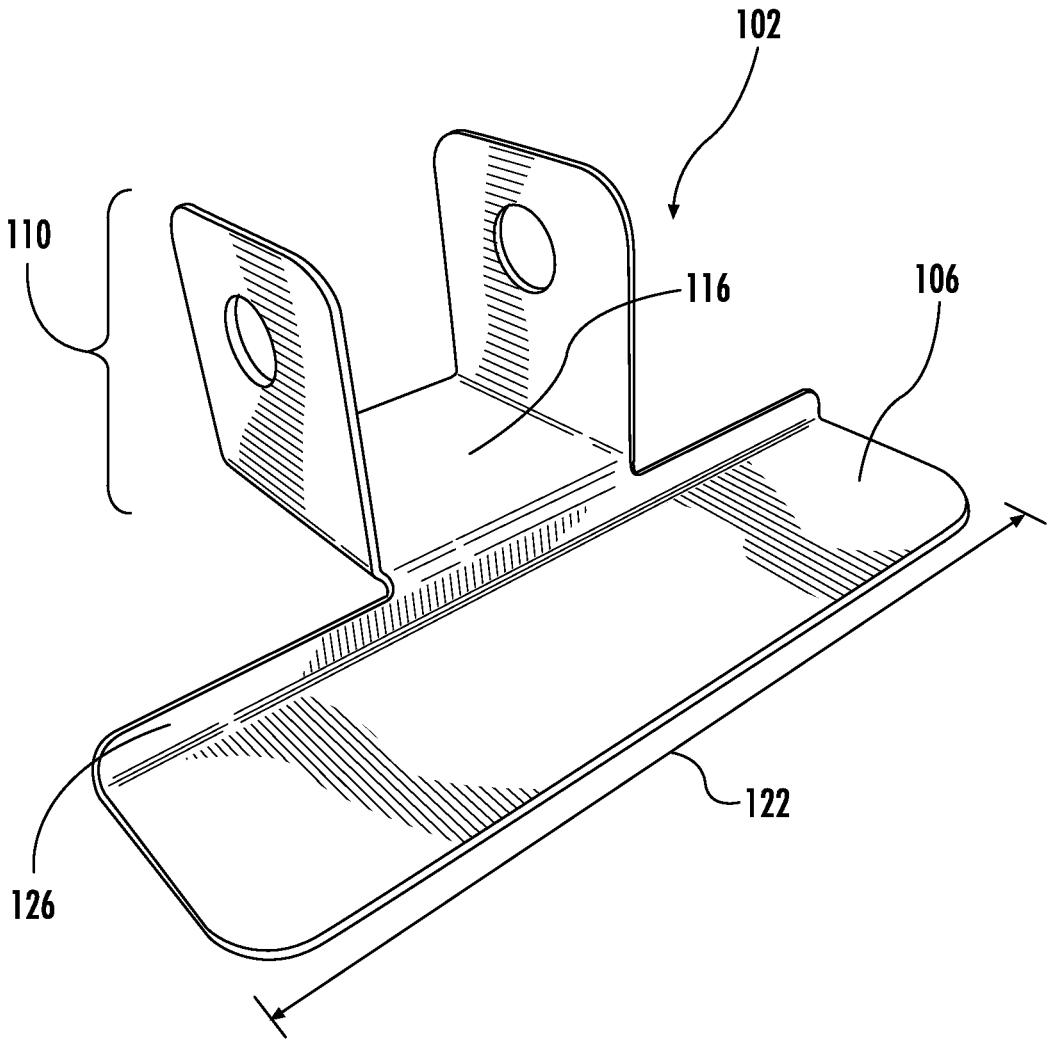


FIG. 8

SIGN GUARD

CROSS-REFERENCE TO RELATED APPLICATIONS

This application is a continuation in part application of U.S. patent application Ser. No. 13/707,456, filed on Dec. 6, 2012, which claims the benefits of U.S. Prov. Pat. App. Ser. No. 61/682,638, filed on Aug. 13, 2012, the entire contents of which are expressly incorporated herein by reference.

STATEMENT RE: FEDERALLY SPONSORED RESEARCH/DEVELOPMENT

Not Applicable

BACKGROUND

The various embodiments disclosed herein relate to a guard for protecting pedestrians and pets from sharp edges of a publicly accessible sign.

Signs are used in publicly accessible areas to direct traffic, provide warning, provide instructions and other uses. In order for these signs to be effective, the signs should be visible and are typically vertically positioned at seven feet but are often vertically positioned below and above this height. During normal pedestrian traffic, pedestrians and pets may come into contact with the sign. By way of example and not limitation, signs are placed in parking lots, biking trails, hiking trails, sidewalks, common areas for meetings and other locations. Pedestrians and pets traverse the area and may come into close proximity with the sign. Due to manufacturing techniques and sign designs, signs that have sharp edges thereby pose a public safety hazard.

Accordingly, there is a need in the art for a device and method to protect pedestrians and pets from injury from publicly accessible signs.

BRIEF SUMMARY

In an aspect, a guard for protecting pedestrians from a sign having a sharp outer perimeter is disclosed. The guard may comprise a body, a post, and at least one fastener. The body may have a flat sheet configuration. An outer perimeter of the body may be larger than the outer perimeter of the sign. The body may have a recess disposed at a central portion of the body. The recess may define a lower surface and a side surface. The side surface may have the same configuration as the outer perimeter of the sign and may be sized to be slightly larger than the outer perimeter of the sign. The lower surface may contact a back surface of the sign to regulate an insertion distance of the sign into the recess. The lower surface also has a through hole for reducing weight and stress relieving. The post is used to mount the sign and the body at a height visible to pedestrians. The at least one fastener may be secured to the sign and the lower surface of the recess or mounting pad.

The sign may be received into the recess of the body with the sharp outer perimeter of the sign covered by the side surface of the recess. A back surface of the sign may contact the lower surface of the recess. The fastener may be used to mount the sign and the body to the post. The fastener may penetrate the lower surface of the recess.

A depth of the side surface may be equal to or greater than a thickness of the sign.

The side surface of the recess may have a circular configuration, square configuration, diamond configuration or hexagonal configuration.

The lower surface of the recess may form at least one mounting pad protruding inwardly into the through hole for mounting the body of the sign guard to the sign.

In another aspect, a method of manufacturing a guard for a sign is disclosed. The method may comprise the steps of providing a multi layer polyethylene sheet; milling a recess in the polyethylene sheet defining a side surface and a lower surface; and milling a through hole in the lower surface for relieving stress between layers of the multi-layer polyethylene sheet to mitigate warping.

The milling the recess step may include the step of milling the recess to a depth equal to or greater than a thickness of the sign.

The method may further comprise the step of milling two mounting pads extending inwardly into the through hole for mounting the sign and the guard to a post.

In another aspect, a method of manufacturing a guard for a sign is disclosed. The method may comprise the steps of providing a mold having a cavity to form a body having a flat sheet configuration, an outer perimeter of the body being larger than the outer perimeter of the sign, the body having a recess disposed at a central portion of the body, the recess defined by a lower surface and a side surface, the side surface having the same configuration as the outer perimeter of the sign and sized to be slightly larger than the outer perimeter of the sign, the lower surface contacting a back surface of the sign, the lower surface further having a through hole; mounting the mold to an injection molding machine; and injecting injectable material into the injection molding machine to form the guard.

The injectable material may be plastic, polymer, thermoplastic, thermoset or elastomer.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

These and other features and advantages of the various embodiments disclosed herein will be better understood with respect to the following description and drawings, in which like numbers refer to like parts throughout, and in which:

FIG. **1** is an illustration of a prior art sign vertically positioned with a post;

FIG. **2** is an exploded perspective view of a sign guard for protecting pedestrians from sharp edges of the sign;

FIG. **3** is a cross-sectional view of the sign guard shown in FIG. **2**;

FIG. **4** is a front view of another embodiment of the sign guard;

FIG. **5** is a rear view of the sign guard shown in FIG. **4** with a sign being disposed within a recess of the sign guard;

FIG. **6** is a rear perspective view of the sign guard and retaining clips for retaining the sign in the recess and mounting the sign to a post;

FIG. **7** is a cross sectional view of the sign, sign guard and retaining clip shown in FIG. **6**; and

FIG. **8** is a perspective view of the retaining clip.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

Referring now to the drawings, a sign guard **10** for protecting pedestrians and pets from sharp edges **12** of the sign **14** is shown. The sign guard **10** may have an outer perimeter **16** which has a footprint larger than a footprint of an outer perimeter **18** of the sign **14**. The sign guard **10** may have a recess **20** for receiving the sign **14**. The recess **20** is smaller than the outer perimeter **16** of the sign guard **10**. Moreover, the recess may have a side surface **22** having a configuration that matches the configuration of the outer perimeter **18** of the

sign **14**. A depth **24** of the recess **20** may be equal to or greater than a thickness **26** of the sign **14**. The recess **20** may also define a lower surface **28** that contacts a backside of the sign **14**. In this manner, the sign **14** is received into the recess **20**. Also, the sharp edges **12** are covered by the border **30**. The outer perimeter **16** of the sign guard **10** may have rounded edges or other non-abrasive configuration so that pedestrians and pets will not be cut by the sign guard **10** in the event that the pedestrian or pet inadvertently bumps into the sign guard **10**. Importantly, the border **30** of the sign guard **10** prevents the pedestrian or pet from being cut from the sharp edges **12** of the sign **14**.

More particularly, referring now to FIG. **2**, the sign guard **10** may have a border **30** that protects pedestrians and pets from the sharp edges **12** of the sign **14** by covering the sharp edges **12** and preventing pedestrians and pets from contacting the sharp edges **12** of the sign. The border **30** may have a thickness **32** that mitigate contact between the sharp edges **12** of the sign **14** and the pedestrians or pets. The thickness **32** may be **1/8** of an inch thick to **5** inches or more. The thickness **32** may be uniform about the perimeter to preserve the perimeter shape of the sign **14**. In the example shown in FIG. **2**, the sign **14** has a rectangular shape. Moreover, the recess **20** has a rectangular shape and the outer perimeter **16** of the sign guard **10** also has a rectangular shape. In this instance, the rectangular shape of the sign **14** is preserved. For stop signs which have a hexagonal configuration, the outer perimeter **16** of the sign guard **10** may also have a hexagonal configuration to preserve the intended meaning of the hexagonally shaped stop sign **14**. Although the thickness **32** of the border **30** of the sign guard **10** is shown and described as being consistent around the entire perimeter of the sign guard **10**, it is also contemplated that the outer perimeter **16** of the sign guard **10** may have other configurations such as wavy, rectangular, etc. Moreover, the outer perimeter **16** of the sign guard **10** may have a different configuration compared to the outer perimeter **18** of the sign **14**. By way of example and not limitation, the outer perimeter **18** of the sign **14** may be rectangular, whereas, the outer perimeter **16** of the sign guard **10** may be circular.

The border **30** is defined by the outer perimeter **16** of the sign guard **10** and a side surface **22** defined by the recess **20** which receives the sign **14**. The recess **20** may be formed to have a depth **24** equal to or greater than a thickness **26** of the sign **14** to ensure that the border **30** sufficiently covers the sharp edges **12** of the sign **14**. However, it is also contemplated that the depth **24** of the recess **20** may be smaller than the thickness **26** of the sign **14**. In this instance, the sign guard **10** still protects pedestrians and pets from lacerations from the sharp edges **12** of the sign **14** since the border **30** prevents the pedestrian and pet from contacting the sharp edges **12** of the sign **14**. The sharp edges **12** are juxtaposed to the side surface **22** of the sign guard's recess **20**. Preferably, the depth **24** is equal to or greater than the thickness **26** of the sign **14** so that the sharp edges **12** of the sign **14** are recessed into the sign guard **10** and prevent lacerations and injury to pedestrians and pets even though the pedestrians and pets may graze the front of the sign **14** and sign guard **10**.

The recess **20** may also be defined by a lower surface **28** which contacts the backside of the sign **14**. The lower surface **28** regulates the insertion distance of the sign **14** into the recess **20**. The lower surface **28** may also have a thickness **34**. The thickness **34** may be equidistant about the entire perimeter of the sign guard **10**. However, it is also contemplated that the lower surface **28** may be a plurality of tabs that extend inward and regulate the insertion distance of the sign **14** into the recess **20**. The thickness **34** may be ⅛ inch or more.

A through hole **36** is formed in the lower surface **28**. The through hole **36** may be formed for the purposes of lightening the sign guard **10** as well as relieving stress to mitigate warpage during certain manufacturing techniques, as discussed below. The lower surface **28** may also form at least one mounting pad **38**. In the drawings, two mounting pads **38** are shown. These mounting pads **38** are disposed on opposed sides of the through hole **36**. The mounting pads **38** may extend inwardly as shown in FIG. **2**. However, it is also contemplated that the mounting pads **38** may be formed directly on the lower surface **28** immediately adjacent to the side surface **22**. The formation and position of the mounting pads **38** depend on how the sign **14** is mounted to the post **40**.

The mounting pads **38** are shown as being disposed one above the other in FIG. **2**. However, the mounting pad **30** may be positioned anywhere about the inner periphery of the through hole **36**. By way of example and not limitation, the mounting pads **38** may be positioned horizontally across from each other instead of vertically as shown. Moreover, the mounting pads **38** may have a through hole **42** for receiving screws **44** to mount the sign **14** and sign guard **10** to the post **48**. These through holes **42** may be aligned to the through holes **43** of the sign **14** used to mount the sign **14** to the post **48**. These through holes **42** formed in the mounting pads **38** of the sign guard **10** may be formed in the following manner. Initially, the mounting pads **38** are provided without through holes **42**. The installer may lay the sign **14** into the recess **20** of the sign guard **10**. The installer may mark the location of the through holes **42** and drill the through holes **42** for the purposes of mounting. Alternatively, the sign guard **10** may have predrilled holes **42** fitted to a particular sign **14**. These predrilled holes **44** may be aligned somewhere on the mounting pads **38**.

The sign guard **10** may be manufactured from a variety of materials including but not limited to a multilayer polyethylene material or an injection molding material. To manufacture the sign guard **10** from a multilayer polyethylene material, a sheet of the multi-layer polyethylene material is provided. The multilayer polyethylene sheet may be cut to size by one of the plurality of different manufacturing methods including but not limited to milling and CNC (computer numerical controlled) machining. As the multilayer polyethylene sheet is being cut by the machine, the stresses between the layers of polyethylene are being redistributed and may cause the multilayer polyethylene sheet to warp. By providing the through hole **36**, this redistributes the stress so that the border **30** and the lower surface **28** remain flat so that the lower surface can receive the sign **14**. The CNC machine may cut the outer perimeter **16** to size then cut the recess **20** including but not limited to the side surface **22** and the lower surface **28** as well as the inner perimeter **50** of the through hole **36**.

It is also contemplated that the sign guard may be manufactured by injection molding techniques. In particular, a mold having a negative cavity for forming the sign guard **10** shown in FIG. **2** is provided. The mold is mounted to an injection molding machine. Injectable material is flowed into the injection molding machine and allowed to take the shape of the negative cavity of the mold.

Referring now to FIG. **4**, a second embodiment of the sign guard **100** is shown. The sign guard **100** is substantially similar to the sign guard **10** discussed above in relation to FIGS. **2-3**. However, the sign guard **100** does not have mounting pads **38** and is additionally mounted to the post **48** so that no through hole is formed in the front of the sign **14**. A hole does not need to be formed in the print area of the sign **14**. Moreover, the visible indicia **37** of the sign **14** is viewed through the through hole **36**.

More particularly, as described above, the mounting pads **38** extend inwardly into the through hole **36**. In the embodiment shown in FIG. **4**, the inner perimeter **50** of the through hole **36** is straight where the mounting pads **38** were located on the sign guard **10**.

Referring now to FIG. **5**, the sign **14** may be disposed within the recess **20** with the visible indicia showing through the through hole **36**. The outer perimeter **18** of the sign **14** is covered by the border **30** of the sign guard **10** to protect people and animals from the sharp edges of the sign **14**. To retain the sign **14** in the recess **20**, the sign **14** is locked between a retaining clip **102** and the lower surface **28** of the sign guard **100** on one or more sides of the sign **14**. The retaining clip **102** may also be referred to as a mounting bracket or bracket. In FIG. **6**, the retaining clips **102** are disposed on opposed sides of the sign **14**.

The side surface **22** of the recess **20** may have a slot **104**. A pair of slots **104** may be formed on opposed side surfaces **22** of the recess **20** as shown ill FIG. **6**. The slot **104** is sized and configured to receive a tab **106** of the retaining clip **102**. The tab **106** may also be referred to as a tongue. Preferably, the tab **106** snugly fits within this slot **104**. Moreover, the gap **108** defined by the tab **106** and the lower surface **28** is sized and configured to provide a snug fit for the sign **14** and the recess **20**. in this manner as the sign **14** moves due to wind and rain, the assembly does not rattle or make undesirable noises. Once the retaining clips **102** are disposed within the slots **104** and the sign **14** is disposed in the sign guard **100**, the sign **14** cannot be dislodged from the sign guard **100**. The retaining clips **102** may have a U- channel **110** that is secured to the post **48** by way of a nut and bolt connection. The post **48** may have transverse holes **112** that are alignable to the holes **114** in the U-channel **110**, No holes are formed in the sign **14**. By mounting both retaining clips **102** to the post **48**, the retaining clips **102** cannot he dislodged from the slot **104**. The sign **14** is permanently secured to the sign guard **100** and the retaining clip **102**. in this manner, the sign **14** is permanently secured to the post **48** and also the sign guard **100** provides protection from the sharp edges of the sign **14**.

The side surface **22** of the recess **20** may have a slot **104**. A pair of slots **104** may be formed on opposed side surfaces **22** of the recess **20** as shown in FIG. **6**. The slot **104** is sized and configured to receive a tab **106** of the retaining clip **102**. Preferably, the tab **106** snugly fits within this slot **104**. Moreover, the gap **108** defined by the tab **106** and the lower surface **28** is sized and configured to provide a snug fit for the sign **14** and the recess **20**. In this manner as the sign **14** moves due to wind and rain, the assembly does not rattle or make undesirable noises. Once the retaining clips **102** are disposed within the slots **104** and the sign **14** is disposed in the sign guard **100**, the sign **14** cannot be dislodged from the sign guard **100**. The retaining clips **102** may have a U-channel **110** that is secured to the post **48** by way of a nut and bolt connection. The post **48** may have transverse holes **112** that are alignable to the holes **114** in the U-channel **110**. No holes are formed in the sign **14**. By mounting both retaining clips **102** to the post **48**, the retaining clips **102** cannot be dislodged from the slot **104**. The sign **14** is permanently secured to the sign guard **100** and the retaining clip **102**. In this manner, the sign **14** is permanently secured to the post **48** and also the sign guard **100** provides protection from the sharp edges of the sign **14**.

The sign **14** cannot be removed from the sign guard **100** or unmounted from the post **48** except by detaching the U-channel **110** of the retaining clips **102** from the post **48**. The U-channel **110** may have a support surface **116** that resides within the same plane as an upper surface **118** of the border **30**. This allows the post **48** to rest against the support surface **116** and the upper surface **118** when the sign guard **100** and sign **14** are mounted to the post **48**. Since the post **48** extends across the sign guard **100**, the sign **14** cannot be bent and pushed out of the sign guard **100** due to vandalism. The post **48** is blocking movement of the sign **14** by distance **120**. The sign **14** may bend slightly but will be stopped by the sign post **48** from being pushed out.

Referring now to FIG. **8**, the retaining clip **102** is shown. The tab **106** may have a width **122** that is about one half or more of a width **124** of the recess **20** and provides additional support to the sign **14** and prevent vandals from removing the sign **14** from the sign guard **100**. The wide tab **106** mitigates bending of the sign guard **100** and the sign **14** when trees and other objects brush against the side of the sign **14**. The wide tab **106** may reinforce the sign guard **100** if fabricated from a material that is stiffer and stronger than the material of the sign guard. By way of example and not limitation, if the sign guard **100** is fabricated from plastic whereas the tab **106** is fabricated from steel. Although the width **122** of the tab **106** is shown as being about one half or more of the width **124** the recess **20**, it is also contemplated that the tab **106** may be less than one half of the width **124** of the recess **20**.

The support surface **116** of the U-channel **110** may be raised above the tab **106** by way of offset ledge **126** so that the support surface **116** of the U-channel **110** is in the same plane as the upper surface **118** of border **30** of the sign guard **100**. This makes the sign **14** and sign guard **100** assembly more stable. The retaining clip **102** may be formed from a stamping process. Initially, a flat plate is stamped out of a larger sheet, Thereafter, the flat plate is bent and cut until the final form is reached as shown in FIG. **8**. The U-channels **110** are used to mount the retaining clips **102** to the post **48**. However, other means and methods are also contemplated that are known in the art or developed in the future. By way of example and not limitation, the U-channel **110** may be fitted or replaced with a strap that is tightened about the post **48**. Additionally, custom mechanisms for attaching the retaining clip **102** to the post **48** may be employed to attach the portion of the retaining clip **102** replacing the U-channel **110** to the post **48**. The mechanisms for attaching the sign guard **100** to a post may be sized and configured to receive other shapes of posts **48** such as round, rectangular, triangular, pentagonal, etc. By way of example, the U-channel **110** may be replaced with a flexible metallic strapping mechanism that can be tightened around a round post, rectangular post or square post instead the sign guard being bolted to the post as shown in the drawings. Moreover, regardless of the attachment device (e.g., U-channel or flexible metallic strapping mechanism) for attaching the retaining clip **102** to the post **48**, the upper surface **118** of the border **30** preferably contacts the post **48** but doing so is not necessary.

The retaining clips **102** may be fabricated from a metallic material. By way of example and not limitation, the retaining clips **102** may be fabricated from stainless steel, aluminum, or other metallic material known in the art or developed in the future. Other types of material other than metallic are also contemplated to fabricate the retaining clips **102**.

The above description is given by way of example, and not limitation. Given the above disclosure, one skilled in the art could devise variations that are within the scope and spirit of the invention disclosed herein, including various ways of configuring the overall shape. Further, the various features of the embodiments disclosed herein can be used alone, or in varying combinations with each other and are not intended to be limited to the specific combination described herein. Thus, the scope of the claims is not to be limited by the illustrated embodiments.

The invention claimed is:

1. A method of mounting a sign to a post, the method comprising the steps of:

inserting a sign into a stepped recess of a sign guard, the stepped recess defined by a front panel of the sign guard and an outer peripheral panel, the outer peripheral panel having an interior side surface;

inserting a tongue of a first bracket into a first slot formed in a first interior side surface of the outer peripheral panel with the sign disposed between the front panel and the tongue of the first bracket;

inserting a tongue of a second bracket into a slot formed in a second interior side surface of the outer peripheral panel opposite the first side of the recess, the sign disposed between the front panel and the tongue of the second bracket;

securing the first and second brackets to the post thereby locking the sign in the sign guard and mounting the sign and sign guard to the post.

2. The method of claim 1 wherein the inserting the sign step includes the step of inserting the sign into the stepped recess of the sign guard with a depth of the stepped recess being greater than a thickness of the sign.

3. The method of claim 1 wherein the method further includes the step of:

forming the first and second brackets with an offset between the first and second tongues to attachment devices so that a rear side of the sign guard is flush to the post when the first and second brackets are secured to the post.

4. The method of claim 1 wherein the securing the first and second brackets step includes the step bolting attachment devices to the post.

5. The method of claim 1 wherein the securing the first and second brackets step includes the step of strapping the attachment devices to the post.

6. The method of claim 1 further comprising the steps of forming the first and second slots greater than ½ of a width of the first and second sides.

7. The method of claim 1 wherein the first and second sides are upper and lower sides.

8. A mounting system for a sign, the system comprising:

a sign having a thickness and defining an outer peripheral edge and an outer peripheral portion, the sign having an indicia on an exposed side of the sign;

a sheet having a thickness greater than the thickness of the sign, the sheet having a through hole for exposing the indicia on the exposed side of the sign through the through hole, the sheet being larger than the sign, the sheet having a stepped recess for receiving the sign so that an outer peripheral panel of the sheet covers the outer peripheral edge of the sign and a front panel of the sheet covers an outer peripheral portion of the sign when the sign is received into the stepped recess, a first interior side surface of the stepped recess having a first slot, a second interior side surface of the stepped recess having a second slot;

a first mounting bracket having a first tongue and a first attachment device, the first tongue being receivable into the first slot with the sign disposed between the front panel and the first tongue, the first attachment device being offset from the first tongue;

a second mounting bracket having a second tongue and a second attachment device, the second tongue being receivable into the second slot with the sign disposed between the front panel and the second tongue, the second attachment device being offset from the second tongue.

9. The system of claim 8 wherein the sheet in injection molded.

10. The system of claim 8 wherein the first and second attachment devices are square U shaped channels.

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